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New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support: causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Oceans and the law of the sea

Letter dated 26 November 2008 from the Permanent Representatives of Egypt and Yemen to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

We have the pleasure to bring to your attention the fact that Egypt and Yemen, out of their grave concern over the threats posed by piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia, organized a consultations meeting in Cairo on 20 November 2008 to address this important issue.

The meeting was co-chaired by Egypt and Yemen, and was attended by the Arab coastal countries of the Red Sea, namely Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the Sudan and Djibouti, and by representatives of the Somali Transitional Federal Government and the League of Arab States. Participants exchanged views on the reasons behind the escalation of piracy and armed robbery actions off the coast of Somalia, including their legal, political, security and economic aspects. They reiterated their determination to increase the coordination among their countries and, in close cooperation with the Arab, African and international efforts, to effectively address this problem, in order to prevent its adverse effect on the freedom of maritime navigation in the Red Sea.

We have the pleasure to attach herewith the communique issued by the meeting (see annex), expressing the views and positions of the participating Governments and organizations on combating piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia and the efforts being undertaken in this regard.

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We would appreciate the circulation of the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 57 (b) and 70 (a).

(*Signed*) Maged **Abdelaziz**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Abdullah M. **Alsaidi**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Yemen to the United Nations

Annex to the letter dated 26 November 2008 from the Permanent Representatives of Egypt and Yemen to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

[Original: Arabic]

Concluding statement

Consultative meeting of Arab States bordering the Red Sea concerning piracy off the coast of Somalia and the means to combat it

At the initiative of the Government of Egypt, the Arab States bordering the Red Sea (Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the Sudan, Egypt, Djibouti and Yemen) held a high-level consultative meeting in Cairo on 20 November 2008, chaired jointly by Egypt and Yemen and attended by the Somali Transitional Government and the League of Arab States. The meeting addressed piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia, and regional and international efforts to combat that problem.

The meeting sought to reach a common understanding of the causes of the escalation of piracy off the coast of Somalia; to define the geographic area affected and the legal, political, economic and security dimensions involved; and to coordinate the positions of the Arab States bordering the Red Sea concerning the means of addressing the problem, limiting its repercussions, and preventing its spread and the resulting negative impact on Red Sea navigation.

The participants stressed the following points:

1. The sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity of Somalia should be respected. Piracy off the Somali coast is a consequence of the deteriorating political, humanitarian and security situation in that country. The participants welcomed the efforts of the United Nations and other regional and international efforts to promote comprehensive national reconciliation in Somalia.

2. The participants condemned unreservedly all acts of piracy and armed robbery whether within Somali territorial waters or on the high seas off the Somali coast. In particular, they deplored the hijacking of a Saudi oil tanker on 19 November 2008.

3. The Arab States bordering the Red Sea expressed their concern at the escalation of piracy off the Somali coast, in the western Indian Ocean and in the Gulf of Aden. They were determined to strengthen cooperation and mutual consultation in order to combat that trend and prevent it from spreading to the Red Sea.

4. The Arab States bordering the Red Sea bear primary responsibility for ensuring the safety of navigation and confronting any threats to it. It was important that those States should be consulted on any procedures under consideration in international waters adjacent to their territorial waters.

5. The participants supported regional and international efforts to combat piracy. Such efforts should, however, be in keeping with the relevant principles of international law and should respect the sovereignty of all States over their territory.

and territorial waters, taking into consideration the short-term nature of the existing security measures and their fundamental connection to the political and security situation in Somalia. In accordance with Security Council resolutions 1816 (2008) and 1838 (2008), such measures should not constitute a precedent, whether in law or in practice.

6. The participants stressed the need to strengthen Arab-African anti-piracy cooperation, and in particular cooperation between States bordering the Red Sea.

7. The participants recommended the establishment of joint bodies composed of Arab States bordering the Red Sea, in order to promote safe and secure navigation in the Red Sea and prevent the potential spread of piracy to that area. Specialized military, legal, technical and economic committees should be convened as soon as possible to make recommendations towards that end.

8. The Arab States bordering the Red Sea should ensure that they have the capacity within their territorial waters to monitor, investigate and confront any attempt on the part of pirates to enter the Red Sea, whether to engage in piracy or to escape confrontation with anti-piracy vessels in the western Indian Ocean or the Gulf of Aden.

9. The Arab States bordering the Red Sea are open to dialogue with the parties that have put forward anti-piracy initiatives and to consultations on such initiatives and on related regional and international arrangements in the western Indian Ocean region and the Gulf of Aden.

10. It is important to coordinate the positions of Arab States bordering the Red Sea in international and regional forums addressing and combating piracy. The Arab States should liaise through the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States in order to build a comprehensive Arab position on piracy and the means of combating it at the regional and international levels. The participants reaffirmed the substance of the report of the Arab Peace and Security Council held on 4 November 2008 and welcomed Yemen's offer to host a consultative meeting of Arab States bordering the Red Sea in the context of the preparations for the forthcoming high-level meeting of the International Maritime Organization in Djibouti in January 2009.

11. In view of the importance of coordinating efforts to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea, it might be possible to draw on the work of the regional coordination and information exchange centre to be established in Yemen within the framework of the International Maritime Organization.

12. The participants welcomed all international initiatives to provide technical or material support for anti-piracy capacity-building in Arab States bordering the Red Sea, as necessary and in accordance with the wishes of each State.

Done at Cairo, Friday, 20 November 2008.